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REVIEWS AND NEW BOOKS

General Works, Theory and Its History

The Instinct of Workmanship, and the State of the Industrial Arts. By THORSTEIN VEBLEN. (New York: The Macmillan Company. 1914. Pp. viii, 355. \$1.50.)

Readers of Professor Veblen's two former volumes will be prepared for certain characteristic traits which appear in the present essay. Among these are the genetic method, a modified economic materialism, and a latinized style hardly in keeping with the author's avowed disbelief in the value of classical studies. The phrase which furnishes the title for this book has been a familiar one since the appearance of the *Theory of the Leisure Class*, in 1899. The substance of the essay may be stated as "the effect of labor on the human mind." The six chapters bear the titles: Contamination of the Instincts in Primitive Technology, The Savage State of the Industrial Arts, The Technology of the Predatory Culture, Ownership and the Competitive System, The Era of Handicraft, and The Machine Industry. Instinct has become too lax and shifty a term to be used safely without specification, and Professor Veblen proposes to limit its content to what is involved in hereditary traits.

While nowhere asserted in set terms, Veblen's leading thesis seems to be that man's intellectual faculties, as applied to technological achievement, have advanced too fast for his instinctive aptitudes. The modern civilized peoples have to deal with a complex and changing technological system with an unchanging or slowly changing endowment of instinctive capacity. Both physically and spiritually they are better suited to the conditions of advanced savagery than to those of the modern machine industry. It was not an accident that the eighteenth century craze for a "return to nature" came in the period of transition to machine production, or that in the present mechanistic age the cult of the simple life finds so large a place.

Neither the manner of life imposed by the machine process, nor the manner of thought inculcated by habituation to its logic, will fall in with the free movement of the human spirit, born, as it is, to fit the conditions of savage life. So there comes an irrepressible—in a sense a congenital—recrudescence of magic, occult science, telepathy, spiritualism, vitalism, pragmatism (p. 334).

It is also a significant but natural fact that in the earlier cul-

ture stages the arts which dealt with living matter—animal and plant husbandry—should have flourished best, despite the tendency toward contamination which was inherent in the attempt to interpret animal and plant life on spiritual lines. The fact that these arts were especially congenial to the primal elements in human nature explains why they were at first and long remained the special function of women.

Under the modern system of pecuniary culture, which supplanted the predatory culture, ownership and the competitive system have thrown the instinct of workmanship out of focus. The test of efficiency is no longer proficiency or the esteem of thoughtful men, but wealth acquisition. Moreover, the workman is a mere machine tender, having little vital touch with his work. Even the entrepreneur, between specialized machinery on the one side and the efficiency engineer on the other, is fast losing touch with the reality of the industrial situation.

Omitting questions of interpretation, perhaps the chief criticism to be brought against Professor Veblen's method is that his attitude is too remote and impersonal. The applications of his argument are left to the reader's judgment, and one is never quite sure that his own conclusions are the ones intended by the author. Further, Professor Veblen studiously abstains from proposing remedies. His analyses are as cold-blooded as an anatomical dissection. A striking instance of this is found in the failure to note how deeply the drudgery and routine of the machine industry have reacted on the laborer's attitude toward his work, and how large an influence blank standardization of work has had in producing industrial friction. The psychic basis of labor troubles is constantly implied, but never elucidated. But however much one may wish that the author had given a more definite trend to his argument and however tough the reading is, it must be said that no more stimulating essay on the psychology and sociology of work has appeared in recent years.

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Money answers all Things; or an Essay to make Money Sufficiently plentiful Amongst all Ranks of People, and Increase our Foreign and Domestick Trade; Fill the Empty Houses with Inhabitants, Encourage the Marriage State, Lessen the Number of Hawkers and Pedlars, and, In great measure, pre-